

Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2006

Town of Los Altos Hills
City Council Special Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2006 7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Council Chambers, 26379 Fremont Road

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Warshawsky called the City Council Special Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall.

Present: Mayor Dean Warshawsky, Mayor Pro Tem Craig A.T. Jones, Councilmember Breene Kerr, Councilmember Jean Mordo and Councilmember Mike O'Malley

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Carl Cahill and City Clerk Karen Jost.

MOTION SECONDED AND CARRIED: Moved by Kerr, seconded by O'Malley and passed unanimously to limit comments from the floor to two minutes.

Mayor Warshawsky thanked the members of the audience for attending the evening's public education informational session. He reviewed the protocol that would be followed for the special meeting noting that the public would have the opportunity to ask questions during the interactive Q&A period and the public comment portion of the meeting.

2. COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS ON DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Mayor Warshawsky invited members of the Council to comment on the Town's district reorganization effort.

Councilmember Mordo offered that he favored redistricting and believed it was now important to put the issue to the voters. The City Council had started the process and he hoped the decision would be moved forward to permit the majority of the voters to determine the outcome.

Councilmember Kerr reiterated his set of objectives for the community that he had expressed from the beginning of this process: neighborhood schools in Los Altos Hills that could be attended by anyone within the community and better relations between the Bullis Charter School and the Los Altos School District. Kerr noted that because of the actions taken by the City Council, the Bullis school site was still available for a public school. He added that this was a very complex issue and he supported redistricting and looked forward to the voters having the option to resolve the issue.

Councilmember O'Malley thanked the audience for attending the session and congratulated the Standing Public Education Committee and Ad Hoc Committee on District Reorganization for their efforts. O'Malley concurred with Kerr that the Council strongly believed in the importance of neighborhood schools.

Mayor Warshawsky thanked the PEC and AHCDR for their work on the issue. He explained that the closure of the Bullis School had been the impetus for his involvement with the issue and while researching the matter he recalled his own childhood experience with a neighborhood school and its value to the community. He suggested that the fact that three different school district boundaries run through the Town without the benefit of a single public neighborhood school; the small town feeling that is so important to a community was missing. He believed this affected the quality of life for residents. Warshawsky questioned why the children of Los Altos Hills were four times more likely to attend private schools; why the Town was one of the largest on the Peninsula without a public school within its boundary; and, why some of the Town's children are required to travel by bus 45 minutes to attend school? In researching a "fix" for these problems, Warshawsky always arrived at the same conclusion each time - a K-8 school within the borders of the Town was needed. He concluded that he would honor his campaign pledge and push to have this issue brought to a vote to let the citizens of the Town ultimately decide the issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones thanked the audience for taking the time to attend the Special meeting. He explained that the intent of the meeting was to be a collaborative session that would afford everyone the opportunity to exchange opinions and make suggestions.

3. PRESENTATIONS FROM THE PODIUM

PowerPoint presentation titled "Los Altos Hills Public Education Update- A public forum to update the citizens of Los Altos Hills on efforts to Reorganize Public Education in Los Altos Hills" was given by Mayor Pro Tem Jones and John Radford, Public Education Committee and Ad Hoc Committee on District Reorganization member. For informational purposes, a copy of the presentation is attached.

4. Q&A FROM PANEL OF INVOLVED CITIZENS AND COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Mayor Pro Tem Jones was joined on the dais by panel members: John Radford, Kathy Evans, Duncan MacMillan and Planning Commissioner Dr. Bart Carey. The Panelists introduced themselves and spoke to their experiences with education in Los Altos Hills and what had brought them to work on district reorganization. Jones served as a panelist and the moderator of the Q&A segment of the meeting. Written questions from the audience were forwarded to the panel for comment and questions were asked directly from the floor.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Stan Young, resident, thanked the City Council for supporting the reorganization effort. He believed it was essential for the Town to control their own destiny over education and that a neighborhood school was an important factor in the fabric of the community.

Mark Brier, resident, congratulated the Council and panel for their continued efforts on the education issue. He spoke to a public records request he had made to the Los Altos School District for email correspondence. Brier believed he did receive full compliance with his request. He shared email communication comments between District officials that had been provided. He forwarded a copy of the comments to the City Clerk for the public record.

Ken Lee, Templeton Place, addressed Council and expressed his support for redistricting and suggested that it was a way for the residents to stand up for what was right. He supported the Council's continued effort with the process.

Bob Kamangar, Snell Lane, explained that he understood the residents "fear" with redistricting but suggested that they look at Bullis Charter School successes to alleviate their doubts. He commented that he had no faith in the Los Altos School District and believed that redistricting would unite the Town.

Eric Clow, Central Drive, spoke to the benefits of having school facilities that could be used by the whole Town and encouraged the Council to continue their redistricting efforts. Clow noted the resources and energy that mainland China was dedicating to education and offered that for the United States to maintain their competitive edge they would have to focus more on education.

Resident, expressed her support for redistricting and explained that the turning point for her was when she realized that the children in her neighborhood within a two block radius attended seven different schools. She was hopeful that redistricting would address this issue and interest more families in leaving private schools and enrolling their children in a neighborhood school.

Marion Robertson, resident, former PTA president at Covington, supported the redistricting effort and offered that the current model for education in Los Altos Hills was not working for a sizable portion of the residents. She believed it was important for residents to retain control over their education tax dollar.

Alexander Atkins, resident, read excerpts from the writings of the Town's founding fathers and excerpts the Green Sheets that were written at the time of the Town's incorporation in 1956 that expressed the importance of self governance and independence. He voiced his support for self governance of education and the importance of using the democratic process for the citizens to determine their own destiny.

Duffy Price, Anacapa Drive, complimented the City Council and community volunteers including standing committee members that have worked towards the redistricting effort. She read into the record a statement from Community Relations Committee Chair Roy Woolsey that would be presented by him at the County Committee Hearing scheduled for December 7th . The statement had been unanimously endorsed by the CRC.

David Pefley, Los Altos Hills resident and Los Altos School District Board Member, addressed Council. He requested and received additional time to present his comments. Pefley stated that he believed redistricting was an unnecessary and terrible idea and would have a significant impact on jr. high schools, south Los Altos Hills and a negative impact on property values. He noted that the Bullis school would open in 2008 and suggested that it was most likely that all children in LAH could attend the school. Pefley questioned the need for redistricting and suggested that it would not provide a net benefit to the community or improve the quality of education.

Resident, thanked the Council for the very informative public meeting. She encouraged the City Council to stay the course on redistricting.

David Spector, resident, Palo Alto Unified School District, expressed his support for redistricting but suggested that the Council work to better explain to residents how they would not lose the ability to attend Gunn if the redistricting succeeded. He spoke to the success of the Bullis Charter School and the fact that now many Los Altos Hills children cannot attend because of the enrollment limitations.

Michele Wu, resident, concurred with Council's support of a community neighborhood school and suggested that it would be helpful to see a letter from PAUSD Superintendent Mary Callan stating that they would accept the LAH students at Gunn if the Town was successful in redistricting.

Resident, thanked the City Council for the public meeting. He spoke to his childhood of growing up on the Stanford campus and his positive experience with public education. He decided to purchase a home in the Hills because of its rural beauty and his ability to send his children to the Palo Alto Unified School District. He cautioned the Council that he believed the redistricting effort would fail if residents could no longer enroll in the PAUSD.

Resident, Magdalena Road, suggested that the naysayers were doing a disservice to the residents and spoke to the importance of innovation in education and suggested that those that were concerned look at the success of the Bullis Charter School.

Bob Johnson, former Mayor and Los Altos Hills resident, addressed Council. He offered that the process of redistricting was a momentous action and expressed his surprise that the City Council did not seek an advisory vote of the residents to better assess their wishes before moving forward to reorganize. Johnson noted that he was heartened to see the Los Altos School District plans to reopen Bullis School.

Martha Bowden, Saddle Court, spoke to her concerns that there would not be enough critical mass of students at the junior high level to provide the appropriate education. She noted that there were 22 elective courses currently being provided at her children's school and questioned if this would even be viable with a K-8 school district. She also believed that the proposed transition to high school from the proposed K-8 school would not be good for the kids and explained that this was a critical development age for children and a time when important friendships are forged. The proposal would split the kids up and send them into two different districts. Bowden opposed redistricting and spoke to the letter posted on the PAUSD website from the County Office of Education that stated the Town's redistricting proposal was not permissible within the State Education Code.

John Radford, La Paloma, offered that he had heard many good questions from the audience and appreciated the scrutiny the residents were expending on redistricting but questioned why the Los Altos School District were not being given the same careful examination and being asked the pertinent questions like how many Los Altos Hills students would be attending the reopened Bullis, when would Bullis be a full K-6 school and why was the District was mute on these topics and not answering questions. He reiterated his support for redistricting.

Marlin Miller, Taaffe Road, commented that the Town was terribly fragmented between the many school districts and it was time to make a change. He suggested that residents should not be afraid of the quality of the education that would be provided under a new district and spoke to his confidence that the community would come together with the addition of a much needed neighborhood school.

Shari Emling, Murietta Lane, voiced her support for redistricting and suggested that false information that was being disseminated by those opposed to the effort. She expressed her dissatisfaction with voting to approve school bonds and then seeing her tax dollars used to support schools in other communities.

Chris Vargas, Templeton Place, summarized proposed solutions that he had heard over the course of the evening: 1/2 solution proposed by Los Altos School District (LASD) which would open Bullis school to serve half of the children of Los Altos Hills and most likely bring in children from Los Altos to fill the school; 3/4 solution which would ask LASD and Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) to negotiate a way to put the BCS at the Bullis site and allow all Hills kids to attend and transfer parcel tax dollars to in effect establish a "proxy" district; and the full solution for the Town to build their own district and take control of their own education destiny. He questioned what the Council was willing to consider-he encouraged the Council to accept the full solution or 3/4 but not the 1/2 solution. Vargas suggested that the Council reframe their statement to say that the solution was for future generations of residents.

Brad Lyman, Wildflower Lane, expressed his belief that a community school was very important and a way for children to forge lasting friendships. He summarized his experience with the CPR effort to find a solution with the LASD and the fact that the ultimate outcome of the weeks of meetings was no solution. Lyman expressed his

support for the Council continuing to their redistricting effort noting that the final decision would ultimately be decided by the residents.

Eric Ramberg, Sherlock Road, thanked everyone that had spoken and offered that as working parents, he believed a neighborhood school was an important asset where neighbors help neighbors with their children and redistricting was not divisive but a way for neighbors to connect.

Mark Ferrari, Old Snakey Road, voiced his support for redistricting but was concerned with the issue of middle school and believed it would be more beneficial to focus the efforts on K-6 and send the students to the existing middle schools.

Nancy Kellum, Esperanza Road, thanked the Council for the meeting and spoke to several comments made by other speakers. She offered it was the kids and the parents that produce great schools and she was encouraged that a Los Altos Hills District school would be a great public school.

Mayor Warshawsky thanked everyone for their comments and participation in the Town meeting.

6. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS CLARIFYING RESOLUTION NO. 42-06 TO REAFFIRM SUPPORT FOR REORGANIZATION THAT MAINTAINS CURRENT ATTENDANCE PRIVILEGES WITHIN THE PALO ALTO SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR 9TH THROUGH 12TH GRADE STUDENTS

Council had before them a copy of the proposed resolution. Mayor Pro Tem Jones explained that the purpose of the resolution was to reinforce the points that were made in the original resolution forwarded to the County Committee (Resolution 42-06) that the Council would only support redistricting if it included continued access to Gunn High School for residents within the Palo Alto Unified School District. He reviewed the language of the resolution with Council that clarified the process at the County level and explained that the design of the district would be a collaborative process between the County and the Town to develop the final plan that would be brought forward to the voters. Public Hearings held by the County Committee would be a part of this process.

MOTION SECONDED AND CARRIED: Moved by Jones, seconded by Kerr and passed unanimously to approve Resolution No. 114-06.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Passed by consensus of the Council to adjourn the Special City Council meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jost, City Clerk

The November 15, 2006 meeting minutes were approved as presented at the December 14, 2006 regular City Council meeting.